

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & GENERAL GOALS



A. Introduction

The North Coast Planning Area extends from the Monterey/San Luis Obispo County Line on the north, to Point Estero on the south, and inland generally to the main ridge of the Santa Lucia range. The planning area includes the communities of Cambria and San Simeon Acres. Several small tourist-oriented facilities are also located along Highway One, with Hearst Castle and the scenic shoreline being the principal attractions. The major land holding is Hearst Ranch, which occupies nearly half of the 261 square mile planning area, which is the subject of a specific master plan discussed in detail in the text. This report describes county land use policies for the North Coast Planning Area, including regulations which are also adopted as part of the Land Use Ordinances and Local Coastal Program.

This Area Plan allocates land use throughout the planning area by land use categories. The land use categories determine the varieties of land use that may be established on a parcel of land, as well as defining their allowable density and intensity. A list of allowable uses is in Chapter 7 (Coastal Table O,) of Framework for Planning.

Figure 1-1 shows the North Coast Planning Area in relation to the rest of the County.

The Planning Areas

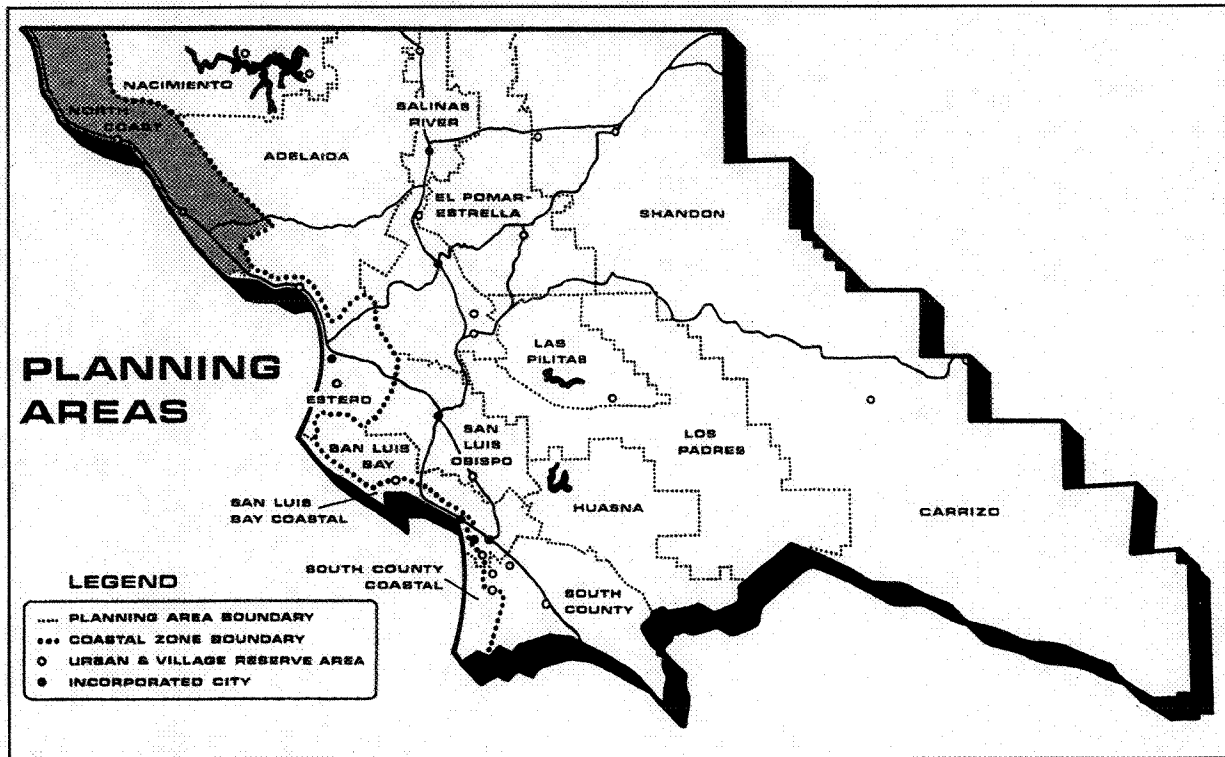


Figure 1-1: The Planning Areas

B. General Goals for Cambria and San Simeon Acres

The goals in this section provide the direction for the communities of Cambria and San Simeon Acres. These general goals, together with other parts of the Land Use Element (LUE) and Local Coastal Program (LCP), provide the basic plan for the area for the next 20 years. These goals also further refine the goals found in *Coastal Zone Framework for Planning*. The background information, programs, and standards portions of the Plan are intended to carry out these goals. Proposed amendments and updates to the Plan should also carry out these goals.

The goals also function as criteria to help determine consistency of a development proposal with the LUE/LCP. New development should be located, designed and built in a manner that furthers these general goals, and should comply with all other applicable regulations. The following are the general goals for planning in Cambria and San Simeon Acres:

- 1. Environment.** Maintain and protect a living environment that is safe, healthful and pleasant for all residents by:
 - A.** Assuring the protection of coastal resources such as wetlands, coastal streams, forests, marine habitats, and threatened and endangered species.
 - B.** Conserving nonrenewable resources and replenishing renewable resources.
 - C.** Balancing the capacity for growth allowed by the Plan with the sustained availability of resources.
 - D.** Mitigating, to the maximum extent feasible, any adverse impacts from development using the best available methods.
 - E.** Preserving and protecting the air quality by seeking to attain and maintain State and federal ambient air quality standards by determining, and mitigating where feasible, potential adverse air quality impacts of new residential, commercial, and recreational development.
 - F.** Supporting the efforts of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, or future local marine sanctuaries.
- 2. Orderly Development.** Provide for a sustainable rate of orderly development within the planned capacities of resources and services by:
 - A.** Developing and maintaining information on supply and demand for resources such as water, and population growth rates.

- B.** Establishing a growth management system that protects communities and resources from the adverse effects of growth.
 - C.** Establishing a growth rate consistent with the growth management ordinance and the anticipated population provided for in this Plan.
 - D.** Providing the lead time necessary to fund and implement the public services necessary to support population growth, considering the County's and taxpayers' financial ability to provide them.
- 3. Distribution of Land Uses.** Encourage an urban environment that is an orderly arrangement of buildings, improvements, and open space appropriate to the size and scale of development for each community by:
 - A.** Maintaining a clear distinction between urban and rural scale development.
 - B.** Ensuring the protection of agricultural land containing both prime and nonprime soils, for the production of food, fiber, and other agricultural commodities.
- 4. Location and Timing of Urban Development.** Plan for a land use pattern and population distribution that is consistent with the ability of communities to provide and maintain necessary services and facilities by:
 - A.** Encouraging the phasing of urban development in a compact manner, and maintaining the "hard edge" on the perimeter of Cambria and San Simeon Acres
 - B.** Encouraging the voluntary transfer of potential development from antiquated subdivisions, agricultural lands, environmentally sensitive habitat areas and hazard lands to areas more appropriate for development.
- 5. Location and Timing of Development within Cambria**
 - A.** First, infill development from the CCSD water waiting list;
 - B.** Second, infill on existing vacant parcels within the Urban Services Line, including transfers of water meters out of forested areas;
 - C.** Third, on other parcels suitable as "receiver areas," accepting development from sender areas through a Transfer of Development Credits Program.

- D. Encouraging establishment of a Park or Open Space District to purchase small substandard lots in Cambria in order to reduce overall buildout and the corresponding need for costly new services and infrastructure.

6. Residential Land Uses. Preserve and enhance the quality of residential areas by:

- A. Locating urban residential uses within Cambria Urban or San Simeon Village Reserve Lines in areas near employment.
- B. Protecting residential areas from incompatible land uses.
- C. Preserving desirable neighborhood characteristics such as compatible uses, open views, yard areas, sense of scale, landscaping, pedestrian ways, and other amenities.
- D. Requiring major developments and long range plans to create a balance between available jobs and housing by locating housing in areas that reduce the need for commuting.

7. Residential Development in Cambria.

- A. Achieve residential design that minimizes impacts to the pine and oak forest.
- B. Encourage site-sensitive design that respects the natural features and limitations of each site.
- C. Ensure that building size, massing and location are compatible with the site, neighborhood, and character of the community.
- D. Assist buyers of properties in determining whether sites are suitable for their vision of residential development (RDP).
- E. Ensure that buildings are constructed in accordance with all applicable building and safety codes.

8. Residential Design in Cambria.

- A. Encourage residential design that reflects the character of Cambria.
- B. Keep the physical scale of proposed buildings and site design consistent with site constraints and resources.

C. Encourage forest preservation as a priority. (RDP)

1. Maintain and enhance the urban forest as a distinctive feature of Cambria.
2. Relate development to the extent of upper- and lower-story canopy trees, their density and age structure.
3. Maintain the natural topographic character of Cambria.
4. Encourage site development that avoids significant, exposed excavation or fill slopes. (RDP)

D. Building Height and Floor Area.

1. Encourage building forms that reflect the site context and the surrounding natural environment.
2. The height and size of a house should be reflective of its site. (RDP)

E. Residential Setbacks and Open Areas.

1. Locate open areas to enhance the forest and coastal terraces on a site.
2. Create a feeling of open space within a site, coordinated with the design of structures and adjacent sites.
3. Encourage a visual flow of open space from the site into the roadways. (RDP)

F. Parking and Access.

1. Minimize the extent of hardscape and impervious surfaces.
2. Avoid garage structures that dominate the site and building design.
3. Respect open space, views and activity areas within a site when designing parking. (RDP)

G. Building Design.

1. Encourage site-specific and contextual design, avoiding massive structural forms that dominate the site and neighborhood.

2. Promote a diversity of architectural designs.
3. Restrain the variety of details and forms on a single building.
4. Design night lighting to avoid impacts to neighbors and to preserve the night sky. (RDP)

H. Landscape Design.

1. Renew the urban forest and provide for upper and lower canopy trees.
2. Encourage the use of native, drought-tolerant and fire retardant plants accustomed to growing along the Central Coast.
3. Maintain a sense of informality and discovery along the street.
4. Encourage landscape designs that consider and respect the neighbors. (RDP)

8. Commercial and Industrial Land Uses. Designate commercial and/or industrial areas that are compatible with overall land use by:

- A.** Designating visitor-serving and community-serving commercial areas that are located near existing similar development and their users.
- B.** Designating commercial and/or light industrial areas compatible with overall land uses that are convenient to users, and are realistically related to market demand and the needs of the community.
- C.** Creating and preserving desirable neighborhood business characteristics, such as compatible uses, safe employment areas, sense of scale, attractive landscaping, pedestrian ways, and other amenities.

9. Visitor Serving, Recreation and Resort Development. Preserve and enhance visitor opportunities in appropriate locations as an important part of the economy by:

- A.** Implementing the California Coastal Act by acknowledging that public opportunities for recreation have priority over private residential, nonvisitor-serving commercial or industrial development, but not over agriculture or coastal dependent industry. (Mod 3A)

- B. Recognizing that while visitor-serving uses are encouraged by the Coastal Act and Local Coastal Program, they shall not exceed resource capabilities, conflict with agricultural uses, or be permitted when unavoidable adverse environmental impacts may result.
- C. Balancing carefully the needs of visitors with those of the local residents. Emphasis should be on careful management of diminishing resources such as water, sewage disposal, and traffic capacity.

10. Public Services, Parks and Facilities. Provide additional public resources, services and facilities to serve existing communities in sufficient time by:

- A. Avoiding the use of public resources, services, and facilities beyond their renewable capacities.
- B. Planning for and monitoring new development through the Resource Management System and Growth Management Strategies, to ensure that resource demands will not exceed existing and planned capacities or service levels.
- C. Financing the cost of additional services and facilities from those who benefit, including local residents, businesses, public agencies, and visitors. When consistent with federal, State and local laws, finance methods may include dedications, development impact fees, in-lieu fees, or other exactions to assure that adequate services are available.
- D. Locating new public service facilities as close as possible to the users.
- E. When consistent with the LCP, provide for community recreation needs according to adopted park plans.

11. Circulation. Integrate Land Use and Transportation Planning by:

- A. Coordinating with cities to ensure that traffic and transportation demands can be safely and adequately accommodated.
- B. Designing a transportation system that provides safety within feasible economic and technical means, preserves important natural resources and features, promotes the aesthetic quality of the region, and minimizes adverse environmental impacts.
- C. Encouraging the development of alternative transportation modes such as

bikeways, car-pooling, transit systems, and other methods that serve the resident and visitor needs of the coastal areas.

- D.** Exploring the possibility of using Transportation Management Systems before making decisions that will significantly alter the character of coastal roads and highways, and the communities they serve.

12. Open Space. Preserve urban open space as an irreplaceable resource for future generations by:

- A.** Encouraging cooperation among governmental agencies, landowners, and nonprofit organizations in the preservation of open space.
- B.** Recognizing the value of open space and passive recreation as both a coastal resource, and an economic asset contributing to the desirability of the area as a place to live, an agricultural production area, and a visitor destination area.
- C.** Encouraging better access to the coast through the acquisition and development of coastal accessways, trails, and neighborhood parks, in areas that do not impact agriculture or coastal resources.

13. Resource Use and Energy Conservation. Support the conservation of energy resources by:

- A.** Requiring energy conservation through a balanced system of transportation and land use. Subdivision and building regulations should require that energy conservation methods be incorporated into the design of land divisions and buildings.
- B.** Decreasing reliance on environmentally costly energy sources, increasing conservation efforts, and encouraging use of alternative energy sources.
- C.** Recognizing the impacts of land uses and water consumption levels that may be inappropriate in an area with a semi-arid climate.
- D.** Encouraging land use and transit measures that reduce the use of nonrenewable resources such as petroleum.

14. Property Rights. Recognize and protect individual property rights by:

- A.** Seeking to maintain a balance between the rights of property owners and efforts to plan for the community.
- B.** Not taking property without just compensation.
- C.** Recognizing and protecting the rights of all property owners, individuals, and groups to comment and participate in coastal planning and land use decisions.
- D.** According to Section 30001.5 of the California Coastal Act:
 - 1.** Assure orderly, balanced use and conservation of coastal zone resources taking into account the social and economic needs of the people of the state; and
 - 2.** Maximize public access to, and along, the coast and maximize public recreation opportunities in the coastal zone consistent with sound resource conservation principles and constitutionally protected rights of private property owners. (Mod five, part two)

15. Economics. Promote a strong, diverse, and viable local economy by:

- A.** Pursuing planning policies that balance economic, environmental, and social needs of coastal areas.
- B.** Recognizing the importance of tourism and agriculture as significant parts of the economic base of the coastal areas.
- C.** Considering the economic and fiscal effects of land use planning decisions. Encourage new development projects to employ locally based workers in order to reduce traffic and resulting air pollution.

16. Implementation and Administration.

- A.** Encouraging maximum public participation in the land use decision-making process when plans are developed and when development is being reviewed. Encourage comments from individuals, property owners, residents, community advisory councils, interest groups, districts, and other agencies.

- B. Developing clear policies, programs, and performance standards that promote the most desirable living and working environment for the residents of the County.

17. Public Access to the Shoreline. Provide for public access, consistent with the need to protect natural resource areas from overuse, by:

A. Maximizing public access to and along the coast through the following:

1. Developing all feasible vertical and lateral pedestrian access easements to and along the shoreline, consistent with other public access goals of this plan;
2. Developing a Coastal Trail through the communities.
3. Developing all other feasible pedestrian circulation systems in the coastal zone, consistent with other public access goals of this plan;
4. Providing a bike path system for the Planning Area;
5. Providing conspicuous signage for all public access easements;

- B. Preventing interference with the public's right of access to the sea, whether acquired through use or legislative authorization, including, but not limited to, the use of dry sand and rocky coastal beaches to the first line of terrestrial vegetation.

- C. Requiring new development between the nearest public roadway and the shoreline and along the coast to provide public access consistent with sound resource management and consistent with public safety, military security needs, and the protection of fragile coastal resources.

- D. Carefully balancing the public's right of access to the sea with constitutionally protected private property rights. (Mod 6)

18. Vision for East/West Ranch. Recognize and support the Vision of the approved Management Plan for the Ranch, by furthering the following objectives:

- A. Striving for minimum disturbance to the natural qualities of the Ranch while allowing appropriate public access and recreation.

- B.** Protecting sensitive habitats and species in all areas of the Ranch, including coastal bluffs, coastal terrace, pine forest, riparian and creek corridors, wetlands, and other unique and valuable resources.
- C.** Creating restoration, enhancement, and management guidelines for the long-term protection of natural resources.
- D.** Creating design standards and management guidelines for long-term public access improvements.
- E.** Providing a method for environmentally sound vegetation management, which provides for adequate wildfire defensible space.
- F.** Creating management guidelines for allowed uses and activities on the Ranch.
- G.** Providing a public trail system that allows balanced and strategic access, and provides linkages to other local trail systems in the community and to the Coastal Trail.
- H.** Siting and design all improvements in ways that protect sensitive habitats and the scenic and visual quality of the Ranch.
- I.** Identifying a suitable area for an active community park on the East Ranch.
- J.** Identifying methods to access the Ranch, including ADA-compliant parking and transit service that provide necessary public access while avoiding undue impacts to surrounding neighborhoods.
- K.** Reducing risk and hazards to Ranch users and surrounding neighbor properties, including fire protection, erosion, noise, trespassing, and litter.
- L.** Providing guidance on implementation activities, including roles and responsibilities of the Cambria Community Services District and North Coast SWAP or their successor, for operational and maintenance issues, and prioritization of activities.

C. Features of the North Coast Area Plan

- 1. Background Information.** The North Coast Area Plan provides information on population, land use, availability of resources and public services, and environmental characteristics. This information is the basis for many of the decisions made in the Plan and is current at the time of the last update.
- 2. Resource Management System (RMS).** This report Plan also includes initiates the use of the Resource Management System (RMS) (see Chapter 3) which inventories the resources of water supply, sewage disposal, schools, roads/circulation, and air quality in the Planning Area. Thereport contains RMS provides estimates of population thresholds at which potential resource capacity problems may occur within the Planning Area. The RMS estimates are updated annually and reviewed by the County Board of Supervisors. at the three levels of severity for the resources of water supply, sewage disposal, schools and roads.
- 3. Planning Programs.** Proposed "Programs" are also noted included at the end of the chapters on Public Facilities, Services and Resources services (Chapter 3), Land Use (Chapter 6 4), Circulation (Chapter 4 5), and Combining Designations (Chapter 7 6). Programs are nonmandatory actions recommended to be initiated by the communities, through the County, or other specified public agencyies, to work toward correcting addressing local problems or conditions issues of concern. They are also intended to support community objectives in implementing the General Plan. Because many recommended programs involve public expenditures, their initiation will be dependent upon the availability of funding.
- 4. Plan Maps.** Land use, combining designation, and circulation maps are shown following Chapter 7. They include the following:
 - A. Land Use Categories.** The land use categories determine the allowable uses for every piece of property, including the density and intensity of potential development.
 - B. Combining Designations.** The Plan designates areas of hazards, sensitive resource areas, environmentally sensitive habitat areas, historic and archaeologically sensitive areas, and public facilities.

C. Circulation. The Plan designates highways, streets, and roads, according to their existing and proposed transportation function.

Because of limitations of scale, the foldout maps in this report are for reference purposes only. The official maps are at a more suitable scale at a size of 1 inch=400 feet (Urban) and 1 inch = 1000 feet (Rural). They are available at the County Department of Planning and Building.

- 5. Planning Area Standards.** Specific development "standards" are included in this report Chapter 7: Planning Area Standards to address special ~~problems~~ issues and conditions in relevant to individual communities. Chapter 7 standards for public services, circulation, and land use are found in Chapter 7 (Planning Area Standards) and provide criteria for detailed evaluation of proposed development projects. The text of this Plan may also be used as a basis for decisions concerning development and subdivision applications. Report, other than is for general planning guidance only and is not to be used as a basis for approval or disapproval of development or land division proposals. Careful reading of the planning area standards will assist in creating projects that are consistent with adopted policies and regulations.
- 6. Combining Designation Standards.** In addition to the land use categories, programs, and standards, one or more Combining Designations have been applied to specific areas. Combining Designations identify potential natural hazards and locations of notable resources. The designations are shown on the maps following Chapter 7 8.
- 7. Coastal Access.** Chapter 8 of this Plan provides a list of County goals, policies, standards and ordinances pertinent to coastal access in the Planning Area.
- 8. Coastal Access Appendix A.** Appendix A contains a detailed inventory and maps of existing accessways and offers-to-dedicate lateral and vertical access to the coast. The attached appendix provides background information but is not formally adopted as part of the Plan. Periodic revisions will be made administratively so that the information remains current and relevant.

D. Relationship of the North Coast Area Plan to the Local Coastal Program.

- 1. Introduction.** The following section provides a brief outline of related State and local provisions guiding the preparation and update of the North Coast Area Plan.
- 2. State Law - Zoning and Planning.** Key provisions from the California Government Code and California Coastal Act guide the preparation and adoption of local plans.

A. The California Government Code. The Government Code guides the preparation and adoption of general plans, zoning ordinances, and regulations for subdivision and environmental review. The Code establishes mandatory elements of the General Plan, and various content and procedural requirements.

B. The California Coastal Act. Policies in the California Coastal Act of 1976 guide the conservation and development of California's 1,100 mile coastline, with the goal of protecting California's coastal resources and providing for their wise use. The Act establishes the California Coastal Commission as a permanent State coastal management and regulatory agency and requires each of the State's coastal cities and counties to adopt a long-term management plan, known as a Local Coastal Program. Each Local Coastal Program consists of a land use plan, zoning ordinances and other implementing actions. The Act also requires 'maximum public participation' in the preparation of proposed plans.

Key policy sections include Public Access, Recreation, Marine Environment, Land Resources, Development and Industry. These policies function as criteria for finding consistency of both development proposals and Local Coastal Plans with the Coastal Act.

- 3. County Organization of the Local Coastal Program (LCP).** The LCP is part of the County General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, and applies to those areas lying within the Coastal Zone. Consistent with State law, the County's Local Coastal Program also functions as the mandatory Circulation Element and Land Use Element of the General Plan.

A. The LCP Policy Document. The Local Coastal Program Policy document contains 13 chapters that respond to policies contained in the California Coastal Act. They are: Shoreline Access, Recreation & Visitor Serving, Energy & Industrial Development, Commercial Fishing, Environmentally Sensitive Habitats, Agriculture, Public Works, Coastal Watersheds, Scenic Resources,

Hazards, Archeology, and Air Quality. Each chapter discusses the relationship to Coastal Act policies and issues, and formulates locally-based policies that implement the Act.

- B. Framework for Planning.** Framework for Planning serves as an organizational document, linking land use, resource management, and circulation. It also provides general goals for County decisions on land use, development, and circulation. A key part is 'Coastal Table O - Allowable Land Use Chart' that shows which land uses are allowable in each of the 13 different land use categories.
- C. Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance (CZLUO).** The CZLUO provides provisions typically found in zoning ordinances. They include permit and appeal requirements, site design, development and operational standards, and enforcement provisions.
- D. The Area Plans.** The Area Plans replaced the former community general plans, and provided goals, objectives, policies, programs and standards unique to each area. The Coastal Zone of San Luis Obispo County is divided into four segments: North Coast, Estero, San Luis Bay, and South County. The Area Plans work with the other elements of the LCP and County General Plan. Key provisions found in the Area Plans are land use maps, programs, and standards guiding development. In addition, standards are provided to guide resource management, conservation, environmental protection, and community character.

Plan Organization

State Law - Planning and Zoning

COASTAL ACT OF 1976

Coastal Priorities
Resource Policies
Coastal Commission
Development
Enforcement
Procedures

CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS

Coastal Commission
Permits
Appeals
Amendments
Enforcement
Procedures

CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE

Gen Plan Elements
Content of Plans
Permits
Environmental
Subdivision
Procedure

County of San Luis Obispo

Land Use Element and Local Coastal Program

LCP POLICY DOCUMENT

Coastal Policies

FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING

Allowable Uses
Services
Circulation
Purpose
& Character

COASTAL ZONE LAND USE ORDINANCE

Permits
Procedures
Dev Standards
Enforcement

Area Plans

NORTH COAST

Community
Programs
Standards
Land Use

ESTERO

Community
Programs
Standards
Land Use

SAN LUIS BAY

Community
Programs
Standards
Land Use

SOUTH COUNTY

Community
Programs
Standards
Land Use

